

## respice finem by handydandynotebook

**Series:** plans? what freakin' plans, one-shots keep becoming series, i am drowning in wip, pls help me. [2]

**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

**Genre:** Aftermath of Violence, Angst and Hurt/Comfort, Billy Hargrove & Susan Hargrove Have a Good Relationship, Billy Hargrove Lives, Complicated Relationships, Conversations, Gen, Hospitals, Hurt/Comfort, Implied/Referenced Child Abuse, Implied/Referenced Domestic Violence, Major Character Injury, Painkillers, Post-Season/Series 03

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Billy Hargrove, Susan Hargrove

**Relationships:** Billy Hargrove & Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Billy Hargrove & Susan Hargrove, Susan Hargrove & Maxine "Max" Mayfield

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**Summary:**

“What’re you doing, Sue?”

“I don’t need this. I’m not going to roll out of bed.” She continues pushing at the guardrail but her efforts are weak and uncoordinated. Even if she had more power and precision behind her pushes, Billy’s pretty sure these things aren’t designed to be collapsed from the patient’s position.

“It’s fine, just leave it alone.”

“No,” she refuses, eyes narrowing. “It’s in my way, Billy. It’s separating us.”



## respite finem

### Author's Note:

had to go ahead and continue this 'verse now. i'm. so. shit u guys, i'm. idek how this keeps happening. or maybe i do, maybe it's just bc my ideas sprout too many ideas and sub-ideas and then i'm in the idea hole. also at this point in time i am currently so high i stg i can literally feel music notes whispering over my skin so if this fic is a mess, i apologize and i promise i will do my best to alter errors and any possible incoherency once i read this again with sober eyes.

direct inspo [taken from the incident in virginia beach where this guy from florida rly did get paralyzed by his estranged stepdaughter whilst beating her mom with a wrench.](#)

Max keeps pacing up and down the diameter of the room. She stretches her hands over her head and Billy thinks her protective hovering is starting to bug the nurses. They both stayed overnight but Billy's at least taken a couple breaks. He got himself some Doritos from the vending machine. Borrowed and smoked a cigarette even though he virtually quit a couple years back. Took a short drive to a Kmart up the road and bought Max a change of clothes, supposing he wouldn't be able to get her anything of her own if her home was wrapped in caution tape.

"You wanna go down to the cafeteria, maybe? Get something to eat?"

"Not hungry."

"Okay...did you know they have a gift shop? Wanna go check it out?"

"No."

“Do you—“

“I’m not leaving, Billy.” Max’s eyes glitter in a stubborn glower.

“Oh, but maybe you should, sweetheart,” Susan says softly. “You’re getting restless.”

“I’m fine.”

“You should get out of this stuffy room. Go for a stroll, stretch your legs. I would if I could.”

Pure heartbreak flashes across Max’s face and Billy feels his own lurch.

“Oh dear, bad joke.” Susan frowns and flaps her hand, the tube connecting it to the IV pouch swaying gently in the air. “That was in poor taste, I apologize. But I do think you need to get some fresh air, Max. I’ll be fine.”

Max pauses. Her hands come together and she taps her thumbs together as she mulls it over.

“I’d feel better if you stayed here.” Max shifts her gaze to Billy.

“Didn’t plan on going anywhere,” he says honestly. Max is obviously wired and getting more antsy by the minute but Billy is the opposite. He’s wiped out after driving for several hours straight and aching from head to toe after scrapping with his dad.

“...alright,” Max relents after a very long moment. “I’ll be back in fifteen.”

She gently swipes the back of her hand over her mother’s cheek. Susan blinks contentedly and hums in approval as Max trudges off to the door. She leaves. Susan’s gaze flickers to Billy and then down. She frowns at the guardrail of the bed and uncertainly pushes at it with her palm.

“What’re you doing, Sue?”

“I don’t need this. I’m not going to roll out of bed.” She continues

pushing at the guardrail but her efforts are weak and uncoordinated. Even if she had more power and precision behind her pushes, Billy's pretty sure these things aren't designed to be collapsed from the patient's position.

"It's fine, just leave it alone."

"No," she refuses, eyes narrowing. "It's in my way, Billy. It's separating us."

Something knocks loose inside his chest. Billy hasn't seen her in three months. He hadn't been particularly sure he'd ever see her again.

"Okay, okay, I'll give it a go. Here." He sighs out and messes with the thing and after a couple tries and a few silent shrieks from his very sore shoulders, he finally figures out how to get the damn rail lowered, adjusting it accordingly.

"Thank you so much," Susan breathes. "Now it's easier to do this."

She stretches out her slender fingers and rests her hand upon his knee. She gives it a couple dulcet pats. Her pinky pokes inside the fraying tear in the denim, soft pad of her fingertip cool against his skin. Billy swallows, wonders how much he is allowed to touch. She wouldn't be this affectionate with him if she knew.

"It's my fault Neil found you and Max," Billy admits, heart pumping guilt like sludge in his veins. "It's my fault he almost killed you."

"What?" Susan stares at with owlsh eyes.

"I wanted to send Max a gift in the mail," Billy explains, speaking slowly and plainly. "I hid it under my bed. My dad saw it when he raided my room looking for some shit he thought I stole from him. That's how he got your address. I tried to stop him, Susan. But I couldn't...I'm sorry."

"Oh, Billy." Susan signs, rubbing her lips together. Her hand travels from his knee to his wrist and she gently pushes up his jacket cuff. Billy doesn't stop her. He watches her eyes darken at the sight of the bruises.

"I'm sorry," he repeats.

"You said it was a gift for Max?"

"Yeah...new skateboard."

"I wish you would've just driven over to drop it off. Because if you came over, you would've seen how nicely we decorated our little duplex...you could've seen my darling little gnomes sipping tea and these delightfully clever novelty magnets Max found for the refrigerator. You could've sat on our couch and while it's a bit worn — we got it secondhand —it's very comfy. Maybe if you saw how nice everything was and sat in our cushy, comfy couch, you wouldn't have wanted to leave."

Billy gapes at her, noncomprehending. He just confessed he's the reason she almost got killed. That it's his fault his dad literally broke into her home to beat her to death with a wrench. And Susan doesn't seem angry at all. He knows she's on the good shit, but still. She's not out of it. She heard what he said. And she is frowning but it's a more fretful expression than anything, dimple between her eyebrows, forehead crinkled in concern.

"I waited for you, Billy."

*Oh.*

"We talked about this before you left, Susan," Billy gently reminds her. "I told you why I chose to stay. Remember?"

"You wanted to protect us," she murmurs, thumb chary as she rolls it over his bruised wrist. "Me and Max."

Billy solemnly nods his head.

"Mm..." Susan's eyes rove the room and then settle back on him as her lips curl into a doleful smile. "How well do you suppose that turned out?"

Billy's eyes travel along the chest tube to the rectangular drainage unit on the floor, the printed numbers and increments he doesn't really understand. Glances to her legs elevated on the pillows. The

right one was more badly broken. Not badly enough to require surgery, but still too swollen for a hard cast. The swelling in her left went down and Susan got fitted for a cast just a couple hours ago. The dark purple color she picked matches the massive bruise that currently blooms across most of Billy's back.

"I'm sorry." He bows again even though it hurts, it *hurts*, he's goddamn sore but not as sore as he is sorry. Billy feels the knot tremble in his throat and he is possibly more sorry than he's ever been anything else in his life. There is a beast in his belly with a thousand guilty eyes and shame in every one of its silent, miserable cries.

"No, no, raise your head. Don't— it's not your fault, Billy." He feels Susan's hand sweep the fringe from his face in a few quick motions, delicate and deft. "Won't you look at me?"

Warily, he glances up. Susan's eyes are misting up as he feels his own stinging again. Shit. Max is going to kill him if he makes her mother cry.

"I am the one who needs to apologize," Susan declares. "For the life of me, I couldn't convince you to come with us. I failed you."

"What?" Billy scoffs in disbelief. "No, that's not on you. I'm stubborn, I'm—"

"I am the adult," Susan cuts him off, voice sharp even as her hand rests against his cheek lamb gentle. "The real adult, you're barely twenty. You did what you thought was best but I'm older and I knew better, and I couldn't make you see it. I let you stay, I left you in the lion's den."

Billy doesn't really see it that way. He doesn't feel like a child, doesn't want to be treated as one. And he's no longer Neil's legally, albeit he's been nowhere near financially independent. Couldn't work for a long time after that gruesome nightmare turned reality that was the worst fucking Fourth of July ever. Had to fork over all his paychecks to Neil even after he could go back to work— supposedly put toward residual medical bills insurance didn't cover, but hell if Billy truly trusted any excuse Neil could and would hold over his head. In any

case, that's not entirely why he stayed with Neil. And staying with Neil wasn't even exactly the same thing as not going with Susan and Max, but abandonment wasn't a factor in the equation at all. He doesn't feel that way, how could Susan think that?

"You left me the address," Billy pointedly reminds her and he does not let himself crane his face into her touch even though it's cool and soft and he feels his stomach loosen with this, this featherlight clemency so careful and sweet.

Because of course he knows why he was left the address and it was never so he could mail packages.

"I should've grabbed you and dragged you to the car." Susan doesn't sound like she's kidding.

"You could've," Billy breathes and he's not kidding either. "You've seen me get grabbed, Susan. I don't fight it. Not in the house. Never did...not until he found that address."

Susan's thumb brushes away the tear that spills over, unbidden. Billy reaches out and does the same for hers.

"I'm not mad," he promises in earnest.

"Neither am I. In fact, I'm..." Susan trails off, exhaling heavily as she draws her hand back from his cheek. "I don't know, Billy. He was going to kill me. Maybe both of us and I could never say that I'm glad that happened because I am not. I am not glad Max had to see and do what she saw and did. I am not glad that at present, I cannot even stand without assistance. But...you're here. You're here because of what happened. Because of what happened, Neil...I never have to worry about Neil again. I never, ever have to look over my shoulder worrying about when he will find me because he already did."

"That's one way of looking on the bright side, I guess," Billy mutters, voice hollow.

"Your father has done all the harm he will ever be able to do, to any of us, and now we're together again. Isn't there something to be said for that, Billy?"



He swallows thickly, nodding his head as he places his hand on the bed. Susan's fingers slide over his and that's how Max finds them when she returns.

"There you are," Susan welcomes, smiling warmly. "That was a bit longer than fifteen minutes."

Max freezes. "Did you need me?"

"No, honey, I'm fine. We're fine. I'm just happy that you took a good break."

Max visibly relaxes and shuffles over, lightly squeezing her mother's upper arm. "I saw Neil."

Billy exchanges a look of shock with Susan.

"Yeah, he had a new guard today and we talked for a couple minutes. Cool lady with a cool name, like some Greek Goddess name. She gave me a dollar for the vending machine and let me in his room."

"Are you okay?" Susan frowns, worry crossing her features as her lashes flutter.

"Yeah, Mom. Neil doesn't scare me anymore." Max leans in and presses another kiss to the crown of her Susan's head. Billy's never seen her more affectionate than this, so doting and tender with her injured mother. "It was actually good. To see Neil like that...to know I did that. It confirms it, I guess? I mean not that I didn't know, because obviously I know I didn't dream or hallucinate what happened, but..."

"Seeing is believing, perhaps?" Susan tilts her head, mussed red tresses shifting over the pillowcase.

"Yeah, like that. Seeing is believing, I guess. I saw the neck brace and the handcuffs and now I'm...well I'm not gonna turn into a badger every time you want me to take a break." Max's mouth quirks, expression sobering when she glances to Billy. "Are you gonna see him?"

"I don't know," Billy answers. He keeps thinking about it.

Maybe he'd feel better like Max does. Maybe he'd feel worse. He thinks he'd hate himself if he wound up having some scrap of sympathy. He thinks maybe he'd rip the pillow out from under his father's head and smother the rest of the life out of him. He thinks he would have the opportunity to say everything he's ever wanted to say but worries that he would not have the words, worries they may dissolve on his tongue with that stern, steely stare that's shackled him all his life.

"Not yet," Billy decides at least.

"You look weird," Max bluntly blurts, scrunching her nose.

"That's not nice," Susan protests in mild reproach.

"It's not mean," Max counters, shrugs a shoulder as she looks back to Billy. "You okay? Is it hard being in a hospital again?"

Susan too raises a brow.

Billy reflexively lifts a hand to his chest, curls his jacket in his fist until the button presses uncomfortably into his palm. Few things in his life had been more challenging than his hospital stay and it wasn't even being in pain or sick or weak, then weaker, then stronger and still in pain—it was sterility. It was being cooped up. It was no privacy whatsoever and never the right noises. It was everything being terrible except Max and Susan even if Max and Susan being around *constantly* was sometimes terrible but never, ever because they were terrible because they genuinely weren't and— and now they're all here again with some of the details rearranged.

Billy realizes that's the hardest part, maybe, that the details are rearranged. Discovers that maybe it is worse to see someone you care about hurt than to be hurt yourself. He cannot speak but maybe they know, maybe they can read it in his face because then Susan's reaching up again, brushing gentle fingertips over his scabbed up knuckles until he relaxes the death grip on the jacket balled into his fist.

"If you decide you want to see Neil, I'll walk you to the door," Max offers.

“Thanks,” he manages, terse but sincere.

“And if you want to see him, Mom, I’ll—“

“I don’t,” Susan breaks in, vehement and almost nervous, hand retracting from Billy’s and clasping fast to the opposite above her chest, IV tube swinging again. “I don’t, Max, I really, really don’t.”

“Okay,” Max promises her immediately, gingerly draping an arm around her in a reassuring embrace. The closest to a hug she can manage. “You don’t have to. You never, ever have to see him again, Mom. If you don’t want to, you don’t have to and that’s that. I won’t let anyone make you.”

Susan’s eyes dart back and forth as she leans into Max as much as she can, releasing a shaky exhale. Billy’s taken his breaks. They finally got Max to take her break. He thinks maybe Susan needs a break too.

“You wanna see what’s on tv, Sue?” he suggests.

‘No news,’ Max mouths at him above her head. Billy blinks knowingly.

“Sure,” Susan agrees, relaxing and shifting a bit as Max lowers her arm. “Um...maybe the animal channel?”

“Yeah, okay. Let’s see what nature is up to.”

### **Author’s Note:**

okay! let's try this again. who tf knows what i'm going to post next, i certainly don't. i never expected to be here this fuckin' long and now i have another crossover horror movie fic planned because it's THE BEST FUCKING IDEA EVER and i simply can't not do it, but the sheer amount of work bound to be involved is already giving me the heebie-jeebies and there's already wip, and wip, and more wip.

whooooo knows what's gonna be next, not me, but i know what's \*not\* going to be next at least. it's not gonna be the max + tory nichols werewolf fic bc

that's just, yeah, fml, that's gonna take forever and it's also not going to be the scrap heap resurrected primis tenebris flos final part with three options for endings bc that fucking monster is still making me bash my head into the wall. so it's \*not\* going to be either of those, defo not, but i got no clue as to what it \*will\* be.